

# Encouraged to Courage!

A message from our Lord!

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by

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I wanted to start by giving you an update on our new friend, Daniel Heath. He and his family are doing well. Daniel is using his company's travel ban to get more work done on his home in anticipation of putting it on the market so they can all move to Massachusetts. He said to say hello to y'all. So... Hello!

I was able to visit and say hello to my mom today, which she greatly appreciated (as did I). I was pleased to see her in great spirits in spite of the self-quarantine we are all taking part of. I suppose it was silly of me to go down to Uxbridge, but I cherish the limited time that I have to see Mom.

One of the things I wanted to know is if she would like me to play one or two of her pastor's video devotions for her (lucky guy has tech support on staff – you have to read my messages). She said, no, that's okay; I'm getting a lot of opportunity to listen to preachers on my TV. It made me think, *"I wonder if my people would prefer, if I quit sending out devotionals for them to read each day."* Funny how our enemy uses little things to discourage us, isn't it? Okay, maybe not 'funny', but he sure loves sewing seeds of doubt in our minds, doesn't he? Especially about our worth – our value.

What about you; has our enemy been seeking to discourage you through the storm of this COVID-19? From time to time, we all need encouragement. I'm not immune to needing it, and neither are you!

God assigned Joshua to follow Moses in leading the Israelites into the Promised Land. God must have held Joshua up in high esteem, huh? And yet, God knew that Joshua was going to need encouragement. What's great is that God doesn't simply "know" these things, but He does something about it as well.

Hear what He told Joshua.

### **Joshua 1:9**

*<sup>9</sup>Have I not commanded you? **Be strong and courageous.** Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.*"

I'll admit – I let you read this lone verse before letting you see it in its' context. Why? Because the command came with a promise, and I wanted you to have the promise in mind first and foremost.

**COMMAND: "Be strong and courageous."**

That can seem to be a very heavy burden, to be told, "HEY, YOU DO THIS!" How many times do people place commands (demands) upon us, and it seems like more than we can accomplish by ourselves? SO much pressure! Where are the resources supposed to be coming from?

**PROMISE:** “*for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.*”

Ahhhh.... There are the resources. The PROMISE!

That is the resource we desire above all others... that the Lord would be with us. It can be hard some times to keep that in mind when our enemy is seen, but our resource is unseen!

**Hebrews 13** reminds us,

<sup>5</sup>Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said,

“Never will I leave you;  
never will I forsake you.”

<sup>6</sup>So we say with confidence,

“The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid.

What can mere mortals do to me?”

But there is more hidden within the Joshua text. Let me give you the context this time. **Joshua 1:7-9**

<sup>7</sup>“*Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go.* <sup>8</sup>*Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.* <sup>9</sup>*Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous.*

*Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”*

There it is in **verse 8!** The command within a command.

*<sup>8</sup>Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.*

Talk about the final word on The Word!

Keep it on your lips.

Meditate on it day and night.

If I could make you pause for a moment and let those two commands regarding the Word of God resonate within your soul, I would. But alas, you can begin the next paragraph any time you'd like to... you're reading!

Are we putting the Word of God onto our lips and into our minds? We should be.

Like you (like me), Joshua needed help over discouragement more than once. In **Chapter 8** God encouraged Joshua again; right on the heels of Israel's first big military loss. And yet, God sent him right back to the same place – the place of Israel's last demise. Well, after Israel had repented, but that's a story for a different writing. (You could always read it yourself!)

## **Joshua 8:1**

<sup>1</sup>Then the Lord said to Joshua, *“Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Take the whole army with you, and go up and attack Ai. For I have delivered into your hands the king of Ai, his people, his city and his land.”*

And it was so. God gave Israel a mighty victory over their adversary. Let's look at the last “encouragement” recorded in Joshua. This time it is Joshua doing the encouraging.

Let's peer into **Joshua 10:25-26**

<sup>25</sup>Joshua said to them, *“Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Be strong and courageous. This is what the Lord will do to all the enemies you are going to fight.”* <sup>26</sup>Then Joshua put the kings to death and exposed their bodies on five poles, and they were left hanging on the poles until evening.

Now, I'm not going to go into the whole of what was happening here (you can certainly look it up yourselves), but I do love what has happened here in our text.

No longer is Joshua being discouraged by the enemy he is having to fight against in order to take over the whole of Canaan as the Lord has promised him, he would. No. Joshua has learned that the Lord is good to His word. Joshua knows that it is the Lord Jehovah whom he worships; whom he serves. There is no more doubt in Joshua's mind that he is God's man. He will do whatever the Lord commands, and he won't be fearful anymore. As a matter of fact, he is now the one doing

the encouraging. Joshua has learned that the Lord will conquer all our enemies. We must do our part. We must enter into the fray. We must stand in the gap. Whatever metaphor you need!

As we continue to use wisdom and discretion in our social distancing, let's remember that there are many things WE CAN DO during this time. Here is a short list – feel free to add to it.

**REMEMBER:**

- To worry about nothing and pray about everything!
- To pray for all in leadership, for our health care professionals, for our communities, our neighbors, each other.
- To embrace (as one of our pastors referred to this time) this "forced sabbatical" and use it as a time to draw near to God, be renewed in Him.
- To keep in mind that our abiding by the social distancing and isolation directives is more about slowing the spread of the virus and "flattening the curve" than about protecting ourselves.

**PRAYER**

Father, we thank you for the times of reflection that we have been able to have during this time of social isolation. Help us to mitigate that isolation by being intentional about phone visiting with the least, the last, and the marginalized. Keep the bonds of Christian love strong between we and our church body, as we seek to encourage each other. We ask this through Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.